



# Fairmount Park

## NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOP MEETING REPORT March 13, 2005

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*Workshop time: 2:00 to 4:00pm*

*Workshop location: Laurelwood Golf Course clubhouse, 2700 Columbia St., Eugene*

*Workshop facilitator: Robin Hostick*

### **BACKGROUND**

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City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted a neighborhood workshop to discuss future plans for Fairmount Park. The .68-acre park site was purchased in 1945. Grant funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is available for minor accessibility (ADA) improvements this year. These improvements will likely include a wheelchair accessible route from the street to the play area, wading pool, and restroom. Accessibility requirements for the recently-reconstructed restroom are the primary trigger for the availability of CDBG funds.

To make sure the improvements fit in with a longer-term vision, the Fairmount Neighborhood organized and sponsored a neighborhood planning event to discuss these improvements and other possible, future improvements. City of Eugene Parks & Open Space Planning staff will assist with the design process to create a plan that will guide the upcoming accessibility improvements as well as future improvements.

Since there is no City funding currently available for additional improvements, neighbors have expressed interest in raising funds to help realize a broader vision for the park. For more information about neighborhood fundraising efforts for Fairmount Park, please contact Sandra Austin (call 343-3452).

### **ADVERTISEMENT**

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Advertisement for the workshop included the following:

- A postcard invitation was mailed on or near March 8<sup>th</sup> to about 550 Fairmount-area residents within approximately 1/2 mile of the park
- An article on the event was included in the March 10 issue of the Council Newsletter
- A news release was distributed on March 10
- The workshop was included on the City Manager's Office public meetings calendar
- The workshop was included on the Parks and Open Space online schedule of events
- The workshop was announced in the City/Region section of the Register Guard preceding the event

## **PRESENTATION**

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Meeting participants convened at the Laurelwood Golf Course clubhouse. A description of the impetus for the project was given, and the park site was described in terms of its current use and features. Basic elements of a neighborhood park were outlined, including overall policies around development level of various park types (what's in, what's optional, what's out), to help frame the discussion.

The planning process was outlined briefly. It was explained that limited funding is available for accessibility improvements only, and that the park is listed overall as a priority 2 project by the recent parks comprehensive plan. The plan was described as a vision for future improvements that would help guide current ADA upgrades as well as any potential, future projects that the neighborhood was able to fund through fund raising activities or partnership with a future installation of the City's Neighborhood Matching Grant program. A draft vision based on ideas generated at this workshop will be presented at a second workshop, OR will be posted on the POS web site for comment and discussion. No design work took place prior to the first workshop. The schedule was given for upcoming ADA improvements in the summer and fall of 2005.

## **DISCUSSION**

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An informal and productive discussion was held around issues and ideas for the park. All participants had an opportunity to share ideas and comments. Participants were asked to list issues, concerns, ideas, preferences, etc. for improvements to the park. A list is provided following this summary for a more detailed report of participant comments.

Participants suggested that negative use has not been much of an issue in the park. Adjacent neighbors report that most issues are easily resolved by direct contact w/park users. Proximity of neighbors and higher legitimate use in recent years appear to promote a healthy park culture.

The southern 1/3 of the park, east of the restroom, appears to be a seasonally wet area of lawn that makes access to the park core areas, as well as recreational use of the lawn areas, difficult for all but the driest months of summer/fall. Suggestions were made to install drainage to help remove water from this area, and/or construct a hard surface path. Concern was expressed that the water should not cross the path and create a slipping hazard.

There was general support for the idea of increasing the amount of shade in the park, particularly near the playground. Suggestions were made for adding shade trees in specific locations, as well as providing a shelter structure for one or two permanent picnic tables in the park core area.

A discussion was held regarding the possibility of adding an informal basketball court. Neighbors were very concerned about keeping use geared for smaller children/middle school age users and not creating an attraction for college students (i.e. low baskets, small non-regulation court area).

Neighbors expressed strong support for a small zero-depth water play feature to replace the existing, now defunct, wading pool. Criteria included location w/plenty of sun, near RR, near shade areas for parents/caregivers.

It was suggested that all areas and designs should be multi-use, for example using the basketball court as part of the zero-depth spray feature.

The following is a general list of comments and ideas presented by participants during the workshop.

#### *General Comments*

- Drainage issues (SE corner, south 1/3)
- Ability to use park all year is important - often too wet
- Too hot in summer - need shade (shade trees, structure)
- Keep field open for informal sports activities - don't block

#### *Facilities*

- Would like a permanent picnic table w/cover
- Would like a picnic shelter, poss. w/barbecue
- Need water feature to cool off - zero depth good
- Small basketball OK
- Add a water faucet w/drinking fountain for use by folks watering nearby shrubs
- Multi-use area: basketball, 4-square, spray feature together
- Lighting - prefer none

#### *Access*

- Open Fairmount Blvd. to parking - why currently no parking?
- Access - sometimes ice forms in NW corner - consider for access route
- Open restrooms all year - many people would like to use them, including I-5 travelers
- Configure ADA path in NW corner to keep as much lawn area open as possible
- Is there a way to prevent skateboard use of new ADA path?

#### *Landscaping*

- Add landscaping around restroom to soften bunker appearance
- Barberry as barrier around park works well - neighbors support
- Eco-lawn possible for wet area? Other wet-adapted plants possible?

#### *Use Management*

- Limit to daytime use as much as possible
- Parks maintenance allows sprinklers to come on at 11:00pm to help move people on - would help to have this if other use areas are introduced
- Add motion detector for lights on restrooms - bright light bothers neighbors - would be just as effective, less costly, etc.

#### *Budget and Funding*

- UofO plans to build new housing on the Romania lot - will UofO donate funds to improve park, since they plan to add a lot of new residents? City should call and ask for donation.

## **FINDINGS**

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The good response and diverse viewpoints offered at the workshop suggest a reasonable representation of the neighborhood's values and needs. Based on feedback thus far it appears that there is an opinion in favor of creative redevelopment of basic neighborhood park facilities, and the sensitive examination of a design option with a shelter, informal basketball hoop, and zero-depth water play as key elements.

## **CLOSING**

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Participants were reminded that there will be at least one more public meeting for Filbert Meadows Park in January 2005, and were encouraged to watch the City/Region section of the newspaper as well as their mailbox for invitations to this event. It was explained that, at the next workshop, participants will be able to respond to a park design that will be created based upon discussions and priorities from today's event. Participants or other interested parties are welcome to discuss the project or submit comments at any time via phone, email or delivered mail.

## **ATTENDEES:**

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The following parties attended the workshop:

## COMMENTS SHEETS

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The following comments were recorded on comment sheets provided at the workshop and turned in to City staff at the end of the event.

Total comment sheets handed in at meeting: 8

Total comment sheets handed in following the meeting: 3 email letters

1. *In what ways do you think Fairmount Park can benefit you, your neighborhood, or your community?*
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2. *What do you feel are some of the most important issues facing the park?*
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3. *What existing features or aspects of the park site do you like most, or feel should be preserved?*
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4. *What do you think needs to be improved or changed most?*
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5. *What are some of the activities and/or facilities you would like to see happen in the park?*
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6. *What other considerations are important for the success of this park?*
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7. *Any other comments?*
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